Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages | Commissariat aux langues officielles

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Service to the public in English and French: Time for action to change the organizational culture

In a report published today, the Commissioner of Official Languages, Dr. Dyane Adam, outlines what has to be done to improve bilingual services provided by the federal government. The report is intended to serve as a tool for change in the Public Service and for creating an organizational culture truly focussed on quality service in both official languages.

After conducting a series of audits nationally and in each province and territory between 1994 and 2000, the Commissioner found that the provision of bilingual service across Canada left a great deal to be desired. For example, the bilingual capacity of the offices audited was considered satisfactory in only 66% of the offices, compared to 76% in 1994.

In her last annual report, the Commissioner pointed to recurrent deficiencies in federal offices designated bilingual and the lack of firm and genuine leadership by the federal government with regard to the full implementation of the *Official Languages Act*. Since then, the most recent Speech from the Throne proclaimed the government's intention to take action on this front. It made a commitment, for example, to devote efforts to ensuring that all Canadians can communicate with the government in their preferred official language. This report released today outlines a series of measures to assist the federal government in forging ahead and making its commitment to Canadians a reality.

The report insists upon the importance of access to ongoing language training and training on the official languages program for managers in the Public Service as well as for employees of offices designated bilingual. As well, Dr. Adam asks that the Treasury Board play a more active role in monitoring and evaluating the official languages program in federal institutions.

"Serving the public in both official languages must involve much more than merely applying a series of rules prescribed by law. It requires recognition of and respect for the uniqueness of the individual and of his or her language and culture. It also means recognizing that linguistic duality is one of the main pillars of our country. I rely on the wholehearted commitment of the political and administrative leadership and that of all the players involved across Canada to implement the recommendations in this report. I would hope that the new task force established by the Prime Minister to modernize human resources management in the Public Service will consider these recommendations. It is time for concrete action to change the organizational culture in federal institutions," Dr. Adam concluded.

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Information

Commissioner's Representatives

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